

study of the issue which de Rachewiltz challenged in print (see his summary on pp. 1–2, but I hardly agree with his assessment that his article “refuted” mine). Professor de Rachewiltz on pp. 2–5 and 224–5 here advances a striking new hypothesis, that the *SHM* was written by Ögödei Qayan himself in two stages, the first in 1229, and the second near the end of Ögödei Qayan’s reign in 1241, with “bits and pieces” (p. 4) added or removed by other hands up to the reign of Qubilai Qayan. Although this review is not the place to address the question in detail, I find this proposal to be subject to such difficulties as to make it hardly worth entertaining.

Although the debate over the authorship and dating of the *SHM* will go on, de Rachewiltz is to be commended for stepping up to the plate with a bold proposal. Discussion of this and other issues will undoubtedly be advanced in clarity and comprehensiveness by this valuable summary of scholarship.

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NATHAN W. HILL (ed.):

Mediaeval Tibeto-Burman Languages IV.

(Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library. Languages of the Greater Himalayan Region.) x, 480 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. €163. ISBN 978 90 04 23202 0.

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It is a veritable rarity to find a volume containing no fewer than six state-of-the-art contributions by seven different scholars on Tangut, an extinct language written in its own ideogrammatic script and belonging to the Trans-Himalayan linguistic phylum, a.k.a. the Tibeto-Burman language family. These six dazzling new papers on Tangut are just one of the extraordinary features of this remarkable anthology, which also contains seven studies on the Tibeto-Burman languages Burmese, Lepcha, Pyu, Tibetan, Nam and Yi as well as one study on the historical development of the Austroasiatic language Mon, which is presumed to have exerted major contact influence on both Burmese and Pyu. Not only do the contributions contain much original text corpus in indigenous scripts, such as the beautifully rendered Tangut and Lepcha scripts, but the editor has seen to it that all Chinese forms rendered in Hànyǔ Pīnyīn are rendered correctly and consistently, i.e. complete with tone diacritics.

This noteworthy book is the fourth in a series of volumes which have appeared since 2002, devoted to the study of mediaeval Tibeto-Burman languages. This fourth volume is the first not to be edited by Christopher Beckwith, but instead by the capable historical linguist Nathan Hill. Steeped in philology and in the methodological rigour of the comparative method, Hill’s introduction takes to task the methodologically deficient approach of Sino-Tibetanists to historical linguistic problems. Hill assails the fuzziness of “nebulous ‘allo-famic’ relationships”, in which practitioners of the Matisovian school take refuge. As Hill points out, historical linguistics is no democracy, and conservative languages with good early attestation such as Old Tibetan, Tangut or Newar have more to tell us about the Trans-Himalayan proto-language than do highly innovative languages such as Lahu or Chinese.

Hill emphasizes regular sound laws, inherited morphology and shared morphological irregularities and faults the deference misguidedly shown by some

researchers to “reconstructions” arrived at by intuitive syllable-stuffing guesswork. In assailing this once dominant Berkeley paradigm, if indeed methodological laxity merits being qualified as such, Hill’s tone is never strident, but dispassionate and expository. His argumentation is lucid and didactic. The composition of the volume and the calibre of the contributions are in keeping with Hill’s aspiration to introduce the comparative method and methodologically sound historical linguistics to Trans-Himalayan linguistics.

To set the example, Hill’s volume contains contributions of a seminal character and addresses topics of pivotal importance to Trans-Himalayan historical linguistics. The six consecutive cutting-edge studies on Tangut feature much original Tangut corpus. Arakawa Shintarō provides a synoptic reassessment of the Tibetan phonetic transcriptions of Tangut ideograms, in which scribes attempted to represent the pronunciation of the Tangut characters with interlinear transcriptions in Tibetan script. In another paper, Ikeda Takumi compares existential verbs in the extinct Tangut language with those in its presumed closest living relative Mu-nya, a Qiāngic language spoken by a people known as Mi-ñag in Tibetan and as Mùyǎ in Mandarin. Guillaume Jacques devotes a study to Tangut kinship terminology and evaluates this system from the Qiāngic perspective. Niè Hóngyīn sheds new light on the Tangut verbal agreement system, demonstrating that the Tangut person and number suffixes, i.e. first person singular <-ŋa²>, second person singular <-na²> and first and second person plural <-ni²>, were reflexes of an ancient Tibeto-Burman conjugation, whereas the Tangut predicative pronominal form <tha²> represented an innovative development in the language. Kirill Solonin provides a study of Chān Buddhist texts written in Tangut, translated from Chinese originals during the Northern Sòng. Sūn Bójūn and Chung-pui Tai reconstruct certain phonological features and phonetic traits of the Tangut consonant system based on what evidence is inferable from the Sanskrit-Tangut transliterations.

Seven studies in the book are devoted to Tibeto-Burman languages other than Tangut, viz. Burmese, Lepcha, Pyu, Tibetan, Nam and Yi. Perhaps the most outstanding contributions are the papers on Lepcha and Pyu, with the most copious contribution in the entire volume being the detailed study of two Lepcha *delük* texts by Heleen Plaisier. The Lepcha texts are reproduced in the original Lepcha script along with phonological transcription, morphemic analysis and English translation, accompanied by an in-depth analytical discourse on the texts and on the Lepcha literary tradition. In another substantive contribution, Uwe Krech provides an analytical reassessment of the Pyu faces of the Myazedi a.k.a. Kubyaukkyi inscription. This major stride forward in the study of the once important but now extinct Pyu language alongside the papers on Lepcha, Burmese, Nam and Yi are a tribute to the editor’s endeavour to cover the entire field, moving well beyond a focus on just Tangut and Tibetan that used to characterize a certain genre in the field.

Burmese is represented by Rudolf Yanson, who provides a diachronic account of aspiration in the historical phonology of the language. Ikeda Takumi highlights several advances attained in the decipherment of the Nam language. Halina Wasilewska furnishes an account of orthographic variation in the Yi writing system as observed in the use of signs in Yi ritual scriptures. Three studies are devoted to Tibetan. Nathan Hill’s contribution on the difference between *gy* versus *g.y* in native Tibetan orthography clarifies a fundamental issue with regard to palatalization in Tibetan historical phonology. Ishikawa Iwao studies an old Tibetan text from Pelliot’s collection of Dunhuang manuscripts, which enables a reconstruction of the process whereby indigenous Tibetan funeral rites were co-opted and reinterpreted by Buddhism when this religion and its new eschatological paradigm entered

Tibet. Sam van Schaik elucidates the origin of the Tibetan headless or dBu-med script.

One study in the volume deals not with a Tibeto-Burman language, mediaeval or otherwise, but with the Austroasiatic language Mon. On the basis of his work in Mon epigraphy, Christian Bauer proposes a revamped periodization of Middle Mon inscriptions. His critical reassessment has implications for our understanding of the extinct Tibeto-Burman language Pyu and of old Burmese epigraphy. This highly pertinent Austroasiatic contribution serves as a thematic foil, highlighting how Hill has managed assiduously to assemble into a single volume and to groom a treasure trove of outstanding contributions on topics of exquisite rarity but of focal relevance to the historical linguistics of the Trans-Himalayan linguistic phylum, a language family which is the world's second most populous today in terms of numbers of speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages.

In the context of the inability of Yi scribes consistently to abide by an orthographic standard in their ritual scriptures, Wasilewska concludes her study on page 468 of the volume with the oracular remark that "indifference towards orthographic issues resulted in an inconsistent use of signs". In this vein, it may be observed that the frontispiece of the volume features an orthographic infelicity in the rendering of the surname of the series editor, and in Hill's own introduction good English spellings such as *favour* and *rigour* appear alongside American orthographies such as *endeavor*. These few slight quirks are jarringly out of character in a volume that otherwise impeccably combines great orthographic complexity with great orthographic precision throughout. The volume offers a carefully selected anthology of splendid contributions to Trans-Himalayan linguistics under the direction of a meticulous and inspired editor.

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LEZLEE BROWN HALPER and STEFAN HALPER:

Tibet: An Unfinished Story.

xxii, 367 pp. London: Hurst & Company, 2014. £20. ISBN 978 18490 4359 5.

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Tibet: An Unfinished Story is primarily concerned with American diplomatic manoeuvring over the question of Tibet after the Communist Chinese invasion of that Himalayan state in 1950. It specifically seeks to answer four questions: the role of Britain, India, Russia, China and America in regard to Tibet; the extent to which the anti-communist, pro-nationalist China lobby in America prevented Presidents Truman and Eisenhower from helping Tibet; why China is judged the villain in the court of popular opinion on Tibet; and why Tibet continues to be an object of Western fascination. The relevance of the last point is that the authors contend that the mythological status of Tibet gives the Tibetans "soft power" that the modern Chinese state is unable to counteract. They suggest, furthermore, that that power might prove of greater longevity than the Chinese Communist Party.

We are given a rather breathless 30-page account of the construction of Tibet's imaginal status in the writings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western travellers, as well as Madame Blavatsky and Rudyard Kipling, accounts of the Younghusband mission that invaded Tibet in 1903–04, the 1938–39 German